SOCIETY and ROGUES RIVALS ON LOCAL PLAYBOARDS.

KYRLE BELLEW AND CLARA BLAUDICK IN "RAFFLES" COLUMBIA.

Elliott Brewer

EUGENIE BLAIR IN "OLIVER TWIST" MAJESTIC

MAXINE ELLIOTT IN "HER GREAT MATCH" NATIONAL

WILL H. VEDDER IN "CHILD SLAVES OF NEW YORK" ACADEMY

BERTHA GALLAND IN "SWEET KITTY BELLAIRS" BELASCO

The Leading Theaters Present Three Phases of English Social Life Ranging From the Smart Set of Old Bath to the Drawing-Room Gatherings of the Present Day.

We will have quite an English atmosphere in Washington this week. All the leading theaters present dramas that deal with the social life of our cousins across the water, and you can take your choice between that which flourished in Bath one hundred years ago and the kind that obtains today.

To add a dash of variety, the offerings include a social highwayman, whose victims are members of the British "Upper Ten," thereby apparently giving us both honest and dishonest members of ultra fashionable sets. Leaving the merits of the plays out of the discussion, one must admit that for this week, at least, society is the thing.

Washington's Unerring Judgment.

Will some one please come forward and explain how it is that Washington can, with unerring judgment, pick the play it wishes to patronize each week before the curtains go up on the opening night!

If this had happened only three or four times this season the matter might be dismissed as a mere coincidence. But it is not a coincidence. Week after week, with clocklike regularity the opening night finds the theatergoers at some one of the leading playhouses and the business at that house continues throughout the week, while other companies are frequently playing to rows of empty seats. And the play selected is always the best of the week.

Is it that Washingtonians follow the criticisms in other cities, or has the Capital developed psychic foreknowledge along the line of theatrical productions? Criticisms in local papers cannot affect the first-nighters. And, come to think of it, out-of-town criticisms cannot be the explanation either, as many of the plays this season have opened in Washington, while others that have done poor business have come to us from small towns whose dramatic critics praised the productions in extravagant terms.

Therefore, unless some better explanation be forthcoming, we are forced to conclude that Washington has a bump of intuition and an ability to judge without seeing that is nothing short of phenomenal.

Gotham's Bridge-Whist Theory.

On the decidedly selfish principle that misery loves company, it is consoling to observe that Washington is not the only city this season that is failing to support the theaters. From all over the country comes the same story, and speculation as to the cause is one of the interesting topics of the day.

St. Louis is quite sure that the aftermath of her exposition is responsible for the languid interest manifested by her citizens toward plays and players. Chicago explains her dull season by pointing out the industrial activity of the Windy City. While factories are working at night and office buildings are presenting a blaze of light throughout the evening, how, ask the Porkopolis critics, can the theaters expect the usual patronage? New York sizes up the situation and declares bridge whist is responsible in Gotham.

This theory, which at first sounds idiotic, grows upon one in thinking the matter over carefully. We have the authority of a well-known clergyman that Washington is playing more bridge this year than any city in the United States. Now as a matter of fact the best patrons of the theater in this city are those whose business is to seek amusement week after week—ever haunted by the terrible fear of being bored. Their patronage counts more at the box office than that of the many who attend the theater only three or four times a season.

If, therefore, the habitual amusement-seekers find sufficient entertainment at bridge to pass away the afternoons and evenings, there is sure to be a proportional loss to the theaters. Certainly there is some reason back of the situation in Washington, and New York's bridge-whist theory may not be as foolish as it sounds.

Our Lightning Playwrights.

If it were not for the fact that we (meaning both critics and public) are the victims of the modern playwright's methods, we might more thoroughly admire the sublime nerve of the three or four dramatists who are grinding out the bulk of our new plays.

As long ago as the middle of the sixteenth century a courtier of Louis XV declared that he who undertakes to write a good play deliberately chooses the most difficult task open to mankind. Evidently Clyde Fitch, George Ade, Augustus Thomas and a few others, not to mention George Bernard Shaw, do not agree with this sentiment.

A "good play" involves all the difficulties of producing a good novel, and several others in addition. To write one a year is quite a task, and one in two years is enough to tax the average brain. Yet our up-to-date playwrights do not hesitate to turn out one in six weeks. Is it the pecuniary gain alone that influences them?

Fitch has about eight plays running, every one of which ought to bring him from $500 to $800 a week in royalties. And still he writes. George Ade is a close second, while Thomas is a less flagrant offender.

Lope de Vega, the old Spanish playwright, holds the record as a lightning dramatist. He wrote more than 1,700 comedies, none of which has lived. Shakespeare wrote less than one play every two years during his connection with the stage, and a number of them were merely adaptations. And Shakespeare will live forever.

What is the logical conclusion? These few modern play producers are presuming on the managers who seem to be afraid of a play that does not carry one of their brands and the theatergoers are being treated to large doses of loosely constructed plots that are neither new, instructive, nor amusing. After a few seasons, will not the patient public revolt and demand something worth while? It may be possible for some Heaven-born genius to turn out a good play in a few weeks, but it needs no ghost to come from the grave to convince us that the playwrights whose names are being featured this season are not to be accused of such a parentage.

A Washington Girl's Success.

From up in Canada comes news of the notable success of Miss Lucia Nola, a former Washington girl, as leading soprano of the Roscian Opera Company. Miss Nola has many friends in this city who are following with interest her career on the operatic stage, for which she deserted the concert stage some four years ago. During her residence in Washington Miss Nola was a prominent member of the Sunday Night Music Club and other musical and dramatic societies, and was for a time a member of the Lafayette Stock Company. One of her first engagements was as leading soprano with the "'Way Down East" company, with which she toured the West. Later she filled a summer engagement with the W. S. Harkins Opera Company in leading roles, returning to New York to begin rehearsals with "Love's Lottery," in which she made one of the quartet, supporting Mme. Schumann Heink. She remained with "Love's Lottery" until the end of its New York engagement, leaving it then to join the English production of "Parsifal" under the direction of Henry W. Savage, in which she was heard in Washington last January.

Miss Nola is a pupil of Emilio Ballari and Mme. Emma Roderick, and was well known as a concert singer throughout the South before she came to Washington. She received her dramatic training under the direction of F. F. Mackay, of the Mackay Academy of Dramatic Art, and her stage work is characterized by the same finished talent and earnest thoughtful interpretation which, with her splendid dramatic soprano voice, first won her recognition.

An Amended Verdict.

One of the most sentimentally interesting knicknacks in the New York home of Miss Maxine Elliott on Riverside Drive, takes the shape of a framed telegram. It is dated six or seven seasons ago and is signed by Nat C. Goodwin. At that time Mr. Goodwin had not yet met the handsome actress who subsequently became his wife, and when his manager wrote to him suggesting her for the position of leading woman, the star, who happened to be in Pittsburg, wired: "All right, but is she not too tall?" That is the dispatch which Miss Elliott has had framed and hung so that it must always meet the eyes of her husband shortly after he crosses the threshold of the front door. It was in Pittsburg, by the way, that the couple were married a year or two after the flashing of the communication. When Mr. Goodwin appeared there a month ago, he wired her again: "I still think she is all right, but there cannot be any too much of her!"

Some of Sweet Kitty's Wisdom.

"When ye're to do anything that kills you—do it quick and you can't feel it so long."

"Love is an old game—as old as the devil, God save us."

"Julia, wear more blue. There never was a man who didn't love helpless wishy washy baby blue. I'm swathed in it. Not only where they can see it, but where they just can't."

"The Irish could bate the world—if they'd only leave off bating themselves."

"Any fool can catch a man, but it takes all our wiles to hold onto him."

"Julia, how do you hold up your hat, with nothing under it?"

"A colonel is never drunk. He only overestimates his own capacity."

Behind the Footlights

The new musical comedy in which Edna May will appear in London next spring is being written for her by Capt. Basil Hood and Leslie Stewart.

William Collier and Francis Wilson are two prominent comedians who will be presented in new plays about the first of the year. Both are using old successes.

Charlotte Walker is playing the principal feminine role in "The Prince Chap." She replaced Maude White.

Forbes Robertson and Charles Frohman have become involved in a controversy over the English rights to "The Lion and the Mouse." Robertson says the play will be his next production and Frohman declares it will not.

Charles Wyndham and Mary Moore will not come to America this season. Their success in "Captain Drew On Leave" is responsible for the continuance of their London season.

J. E. Dodson, William Farnum, Maude Fealy and Sarah Truax are some of the 500 people who will appear in "A Prince of India," when the play is presented in Chicago early in the new year.

"Spangles; or The Wooden Horse" is the name of a new musical comedy, which will be given its first production soon in Philadelphia. Van Rensslear Wheeler has been engaged for one of the prominent roles.

Clyde Fitch is so interested in "The Toast of the Town," in which Viola Allen is now starring, that he went to Cleveland last week for the express purpose of personally rehearsing Robert Drout and Ferdinand Gottschalk in the roles to which they have been assigned.

It is said that Chrystal Herne will play the leading role in "The Jury of Fate," which H. B. Irving is now presenting in London. Miss Herne last appeared in the ill-fated production of "Mrs. Warren's Profession."

Beerbohm Tree has been unanimously elected president of the Theatrical Managers' Association of England, a post which was long held by Sir Henry Irving, and in which he was serving at the time of his death.

Henry Arthur Jones, the English playwright, has sailed for his home in England, but likes America so well that he will return for another visit in the spring. At that time he will deliver lectures on the drama at various prominent colleges.

Edna Aug, who has won renown in vaudeville, will be the chief support of Peter F. Dailey in "The Press Agent."

"The Blue Moon" will probably be among the season's productions of the Shuberts. The piece is one of the year's successes in London, where it has been running at the Lyric Theater.

William Gillette is playing a record engagement in London, with a revival of "Sherlock Holmes." Gillette will return to America about the first of the year, but his plans on this side of the water have not yet been announced.

Charles Frohman, who always keeps one eye fixed religiously on the French stage, has acquired the American rights to "The Duel," by Henri Lavedan, which is now successfully running at the Comedie Francais.

Ethel Barrymore in "Sunday" is repeating in the West her success made in Eastern cities, and is now turning her steps this way. Miss Barrymore will appear later in the season in J. M. Barrie's play, "Alice Sit by the Fire."

Paula Edwardes is to have a new musical comedy this season. It will be called "Princess Beggar,' and will be the joint work of Paulton and Robyns.

Channing Pollock, a former Washingtonian, is fast coming to the front among American playwrights. Mr. Pollock's play, "The Little Grey Lady," was recently successfully produced, and now the announcement is made that another play, "The Secret Orchard," will have its premiere production within a few weeks. "The Secret Orchard," like nearly all of Mr. Pollock's plays, will be first presented in Hartford.

The heirs of Sam S. Shubert, who died as the result of injuries in a railroad accident a few months ago, will sue the Pennsylvania railroad for $50,000. It is said the road offered to compromise for $25,000 and when this was refused and $50,000 demanded agents of the road are said to have claimed that Shubert was traveling on a pass. The heirs answered this by declaring the pass was given in return for advertising and the suit is likely to come up within a short time.

Offerings at the Playhouses.

One of the social as well as one of the theatrical events of the season is scheduled for the National tomorrow night in the opening of Miss Maxine Elliott's annual engagement. It will be a social event because Miss Elliott and Mr. Dillingham, her manager, have agreed to give Monday night's performance as a benefit for the Mt. Vernon Seminary Association, with a view particularly to helping them in the maintenance of their free kindergarten work. It will be a theatrical event, of course, because there is no one on the American stage today better worth seeing than Miss Maxine Elliott. She comes directly from a long and successful engagement at the Criterion Theater, New York. Her play "Her Great Match," by Clyde Fitch, has been an unequivocal success and is said to give her one of the best parts she has ever had.

The play is a modern comedy in four acts. It opens during a charity fete at Medderham Manor in Hertfordshire, England. Miss Elliott, whose world-famous beauty is so much in evidence as ever, plays "Jo" Sheldon, an American girl traveling with her step-mother, Mrs. Sheldon, in Europe, and at this time being entertained at the Manor.

To assist at the fete, "Jo" dresses as a gypsy and essays to tell the fortunes of those who visit her tent on the Manor grounds. Here comes the Crown Prince of Eastphalia, handsome and of an honored family, whom Jo has met once before. The young couple, it is at once evident, are deeply in love, but the prince cannot marry outside of royalty. He is chaperoned by a lovable old aunt, the Grand Duchess of Hohenetstein, who is expected to discourage his love-making, but she has been young herself and in love, and sympathizes with the young people. Of course, it ends in a proposal for a morganatic marriage—rather a delicate matter for an American playwright to tackle—but Mr. Fitch not only avoids offense, but, it is said, solves the problem in a thoroughly satisfactory manner.

The romance is said to be at once so witty, and so dainty and so logical as to deserve all the success that it won in New York. Of course, Miss Elliott wears stunning gowns. The scenery by Gates and Morange is regarded as one of the features of the production, which has, of course, been staged under the personal direction of Mr. Fitch himself. The supporting company includes Charles Cherry, Herbert Standing, Leon Quatermain, Mathilde Cottrelly Madge Girdlestone, Nelly Thorne and Suzanne Perry.

Matinees Thursday (Thanksgiving Day) and Saturday.

Columbia—"Raffles."

In "Raffles, the Amateur Cracksman," which plays a return engagement at the Columbia next week, Kyrle Bellew makes a fascinating study in criminology, and has the support of a company that is strong in every particular. "Raffles" is frankly a detective story with abundant suspense and surprise. Raffles, as portrayed by Mr. Bellew, is a man of the world, a sportsman, a bit